

### Pop Quiz: Marketing Yourself as a Professional

*Clothes don't make the man, but clothes have got many a man a good job. Herbert Harold Vreeland*

It's time once again for spring fever, pollen, and dusting off your marketing strategies. Usually, we talk about marketing to sell houses and services. But this month, I want to talk about marketing to sell *yourself*. Do people know who you are? Are they impressed with what they see? Here, in the form of a pop quiz, are four tips for making sure the world sees you at your best.

1. For the first time in 40 years, your family is having a reunion at your Great Aunt Bilonia's house in Frognot, Texas. Two hundred people will be coming from around the country, including a few from your home state. You should:
  - a. Call Aunt Bilonia and get a list of the attendees before you leave. Pack a box of marketing materials. Make sure each and every one of your relatives receives your brochure, a four-minute "elevator speech," and a travel alarm clock with your logo.
  - b. Arrive early for the big dinner on Saturday night so you can put business cards on every plate before the guests arrive.
  - c. Refuse to talk about business, even if someone asks. Talking business at family functions is really tacky.
  - d. Go and enjoy yourself – but if it comes up, feel free to talk about what you do.

The right answer is "D." Be open to marketing opportunities at all times, but don't get obnoxious about it. Sometimes, it's all right to leave the marketing materials in the car. In other words, don't hand out your promotional glowsticks at Grandpa Fellini's funeral. He wouldn't approve.

2. Your daughter's soccer team is looking for a sponsor, and you are looking for a marketing opportunity. Sounds perfect, right? But your daughter is mortified by the possibility that her last name will be plastered all over her teammates' uniforms. You should:
  - a. Respect your daughter's feelings and find a different marketing method.
  - b. Bribe your daughter with 10% of the profits you'll make as a result of the sponsorship.
  - c. Sponsor the team loud and proud. It's your duty as a parent to embarrass your teenage children at least once every six months.
  - d. Provide financial support to the team, but design the jerseys so your company name will be really, really small.

Are you kidding? The answer is C. Don't hold back! Heck, offer to sing the national anthem at all the games. Okay, maybe that's a bit much. The point is, good marketing requires you to put yourself out there, even when it's uncomfortable. You (or your daughter) may feel vulnerable and exposed when you advertise yourself, but maximum profits spring from maximum positive exposure. You won't get what's behind door number three as long as you're hiding behind it yourself. Believe me, your daughter will get over it when you buy her a car out of those increased profits.

3. You're just starting out and you're really broke. Still, you want to convey a professional image. What do you do?
- Buy one fabulous designer suit and wear it every day for three weeks until it makes everyone's eyes water.
  - Buy nice, reasonably priced clothes at a discount store.
  - Make sure your shoes are polished and your clothes are ironed.
  - Offer to wear nothing at all.
  - All of the above.
  - None of the above.
  - A and D.
  - B and C.
  - B, C, and D.
  - Everything but E.
  - Not K.

Teachers who write test questions like this should be prosecuted. Just in case you still remember the question, the answer is "H". People really do notice fashion disasters. If you look sloppy, people will assume that your work is sloppy, too. So keep your work clothes clean and neat. Wear things that fit well, even if you have to go to a thrift store to do it. No one will know the difference

4. *Integrity* is to *successful real estate investing* as:
- Fish* are to *bicycles*.
  - Icing* is to *cake*.
  - Water* is to *life*.
  - Bill* is to *Hillary*.

I always hated these analogy questions. The answer to this one is "C." Your number one marketing tool is word of mouth, so integrity is absolutely essential for your success (as opposed to icing, which is tasty, but optional). Why is integrity so important? Because the more deals you do, the more people will get to know you. If they like what they see, they'll give you referrals. They'll negotiate more readily. They'll go to bat for you. If they don't like what they see, they'll tell others – including, perhaps, the state attorney general. So, do what you say you'll do. Return phone calls. Pay your bills. Be courteous. That's the very best kind of marketing you can do.

So, how did you do on our little pop quiz? It's really very simple, when you come right down to it: Be ready to market at all times, but don't get obnoxious about it. Put yourself out there, even if it means leaving your comfort zone. Make sure you look like the professional you are. Finally, establish a reputation for honesty, responsiveness, and fair dealing. And then, cut your kid a check for her share of the profits.

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**Synopsis:** It's not enough to market your homes and the services you offer. You also need to market yourself as a professional. That doesn't mean you have to market at every family function. Be ready to market at all times, but don't get obnoxious about it. Put yourself out there, even if it means leaving your comfort zone. Make sure you look professional. Finally, establish a reputation for honesty, responsiveness, and fair dealing.